

Community Planning and Economic Development News Release

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City of Minneapolis Passes Two Zoning Code Text Amendments Allowing Increased Flexibility in Commercial Use Regulations

Friday, December 11, 2015 (Minneapolis) - The Minneapolis City Council unanimously voted to pass a zoning code text amendment today that increases the flexibility in regulations governing limited production and processing uses and the size of commercial uses generally. A companion amendment allowing small-scale grain milling was also passed by the Council.

“The sustainability and growth of our local economy can’t rely on regulations based on outdated business practices,” said Mayor Betsy Hodges. “The changes made to our zoning code today are yet another example on how the City can promote entrepreneurship through streamlining and innovation.”

Authored by Ward 2 Council Member Cam Gordon, the “commercial sizes” text amendment increases the maximum size allowance for commercial uses in all commercial zoning districts and the High-density Office Residence District (OR2). The amendment will also allow for a broader range of uses in buildings with OR2 zoning. The adopted changes will streamline the development review process and allow for appropriately-sized commercial uses throughout the city. The modifications to the OR2 zoning district will make this district a more viable option for mixed-use buildings with small-scale, neighborhood-serving uses.

“I am excited to see how this opens up opportunities to allow more small businesses to bring increased vitality and services to our commercial areas as well as provide economic opportunities and quality jobs for residents,” said Ward 2 Council Member Cam Gordon.

The amendments also overhaul the regulations for limited production and processing by increasing the maximum allowed size of such uses from 1,200 square feet to 5,000 square feet and make limited production and processing a permitted use in all commercial districts where a conditional use permit is currently required. The small-scale grain milling text amendment allows for artisanal grain milling in more parts of the city as a standalone use or for an onsite bakery. The former flour milling capital of the world will be able to produce more goods made from Minnesota wheat and Minneapolis milled flour with the passing of the text amendment.

“If you are known as the Mill City, milling really should not be a prohibited activity,” said Ward 3 Council Member Jacob Frey and author of the small-scale grain milling text amendment. “In Northeast Minneapolis we are quickly becoming the standard for locally made products, and I’m proud that the newest edition will be freshly milled flour and baked breads.”

Most of the conditional use permits for limited production and processing in recent years have been for food and beverage production uses. In recent years, entrepreneurs have opened small-scale establishments throughout the city that create cured meats, chocolate, beer, spirits, honey and other food and beverage products. This has helped fill commercial storefronts and provided uniqueness to Minneapolis. With the adopted changes, these types of businesses could now be established administratively, without a public hearing before the City Planning Commission.

“With these changes, we will now be able to open our small mill and bakery in the FOOD BUILDING in NE Minneapolis,” said Steve Horton, long time baker and former co-owner of Rustica. “Our goal is to procure grain mainly from Minnesota and mill it into flour that is sold to local kitchens and retail customers as well as mix doughs that will become our wholesale bread line.”

The text amendments support City goals of being a hub of economic activity, innovation and supportive of entrepreneurs. Planning staff anticipates that the amendment will support job creation and continue the artisanal food and beverage production trend that has taken root in the City.

Staff presented the ordinances to the City Planning Commission on November 2, 2015, which unanimously recommended approval to the City Council’s Zoning & Planning Committee. The Zoning & Planning Committee also voted in support of the ordinances on December 3, 2015 and forwarded it to the full City Council for review on December 11, 2015. The ordinances will be in effect as of December 19, 2015. Additional information on the [commercial sizes](#) and [grain milling](#) amendments can be found in City staff reports prepared for the City Planning Commission.

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